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INDIA'S  
SEARCH  
for GOD ~ M. P. DAVIS



*E.H. Mearns —*  
*In remembrance*  
*of a "lonely" visit*  
*18/3/38 D.*

INDIA'S SEARCH FOR GOD

## HOPE

“To distracted India, with its whole head and heart  
sick, there comes a message of hope,—a living  
person, Jesus Christ.”

—*Principal Sushil Rudra.*

## INDIA'S GLORIOUS FUTURE

“Ah, Aryan land, blest, blest is she!  
A magic might is in her name;  
Unrivalled stands her ancient fame;  
And we, her sons, thrice blessed are we!

“Hail, happy omens! Presaging  
The goal of all my country's woes,—  
Pledge that from out her travail-throes  
A new and glorious birth shall spring.

“Yea, at the end of pregnant strife,  
Enthroned as guru of the earth,  
This land of Hind shall teach the worth  
Of Christian faith and Christian life.

“In sooth her name, in letters bright,  
Before all other names, I trow,  
Is writ, Lord Christ, upon thy brow;  
And her to serve is my delight.”

—*N. V. Tilak.*

(Christian Poet of Maharashtra)

# INDIA'S SEARCH FOR GOD

*A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF INDIA'S  
ANCIENT RELIGION AND THE IMPORT OF  
CHRISTIANITY UPON THE LIFE OF THE  
INDIAN PEOPLE*

BY

MARTIN P. DAVIS

Missionary to India

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THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS  
EVANGELICAL SYNOD OF NORTH AMERICA  
(Evangelical and Reformed Church)  
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## Introduction

A sympathetic understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of non-Christian peoples is more than a matter of academic interest. It is an essential part of the missionary's equipment, for it gives him an intelligent point of contact and makes possible a more effective presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by way of comparison and contrast.

Years of missionary service among the people of India have enabled the author of this booklet, the Rev. M. P. Davis, D.D., to gain by personal contact, diligent study, and faithful observation, an insight into the Hindu religion. We are grateful to him for passing on to others his interpretation of India's search for God through the long ages of her history. The Board of Foreign Missions of the Evangelical Synod regards this latest publication a valuable addition to the missionary literature of our denomination and recommends it most heartily to all friends and supporters of the missionary cause with the fervent prayer that it may help to deepen their understanding of the missionary task.

THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

*Theo. R. Schmale, Chairman.*

# Summary of Contents

	PAGE
I. INDIA'S FLIGHT UPWARDS.....	1
India attempts to find God, unassisted, through reason, intuition, meditation.	
II. THE MIRAGE.....	5
Intuitive metaphysics leads to mirage: "I am It!"	
III. TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.....	9
A personal God is discovered; BUT,— who is He, and where?	
IV. HEAVEN SUFFERS VIOLENCE.....	15
Incarnations of Vishnu are created to bring God down from above.	
V. IS IT HE?.....	19
Not satisfied with prehistoric incarna- tions, another is sought near-by—Gandhi.	
VI. ONE THOUSAND AND ONE.....	23
Not sure about Gandhi, they accept pre- tenders of Kalanki, the expected final and tenth avatar of Vishnu.	



VII.	HEAVEN RECEDES, HOPE IS DEFERRED.....	27
	The doctrine of karma and transmigra- tion defers the possible attainment of India's desire to a hopeless and distant future.	
VIII.	A MODERN SUBSTITUTE FOR GOD.....	33
	The idolatry of Nationalism is not usher- ing in the Kingdom of God.	
IX.	IMMANUEL—GOD WITH US.....	39
	God Himself reaches down, Christ is born, “who seeth Him, seeth the Father.”	
X.	LOVE'S FRONTIER.....	47
	The ultimate limit to which God could go to demonstrate His love—the Crucifixion.	
XI.	CHRIST VICTORIOUS.....	53
	The living Christ present in His Church, the agent of God's Kingdom on earth.	
XII.	INDIA'S SEARCH REWARDED.....	61
	A summary as epitomized in the experi- ence of a Brahmin convert.	
XIII.	GLOSSARY .....	67



*"In vain I seek to fly to Thee."*

# I. India's Flight Upwards

In Ellore on the outside wall of a temple, hewn out of solid rock more than 1,500 years ago, pious masons artistically chiseled the figure of a woman about to fly upwards into space; it represents Mother India's attempted flight towards the abode of the gods.

Excavations reveal that, as long ago as 3,500 before Christ, India was endeavouring to achieve this end. This continued attempt to rise to the presence of God has made India the spiritual mother of one fourth of the human race. Hence one can not think of a social question affecting the Hindu community that is not bound up with religious considerations. She can not move hand or foot without a religious reason; and from that ancient day unto this she continues to ask: "How can I attain unto His presence?" Her songs, her poetry, her philosophy, her prayers, her sighs and longings are all variations of the saint's cry:

"Tell us—when shall we meet?  
Thou, O Lord, and I, Thy devotee.  
In vain I seek to fly to Thee."

Sir N. Chandravarkar, High Court Judge of Bombay, said: "Our philosophers and thinkers soared so high in the regions of speculations that they forgot the world, detached themselves from it, professed contempt for it, and dwelt in the vision of theory." When the Rev. Rahator of Bombay met

a seeking sadhu in isolation, he remarked: "You are like a dog going off alone, with a bone, leaving the people hungry and with nothing to eat." A simple villager used a more striking expression: "They rise so high like a palm-tree, but give us poor people no shade." Even so their goal and purpose was a noble one. The flight of Mother India's soul upwards was in the power of her own strength. Her quest was an uninterrupted monologue: she talked up to God, or to God within herself, and ultimately to herself as God. The flight was the soul's, upward, not God's movement downwards. Although not reaching the goal, she continued the attempt throughout the ages to soar, unassisted. "The lower rises on tiptoe towards, and thirsts after, the higher." But the artist and mason, the philosopher and the poet, make no suggestion of the higher bending down to and aiding the lower. "The Hindu Vedantist climbs higher and higher, like a spider, on a thread he himself has spun—but no higher."

Buddha gave this parting advice to his anxious disciples: "Be ye lamps unto yourselves, be ye a refuge unto yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge." And yet at the age of eighty, and near the end of this life of self-sufficiency, when he was asked about God, he remained silent. Unfortunately his agnostic silence was interpreted as a denial of God. His self-propelled flight brought the seeking disciples no news from God. Tukaram, India's beloved poet of religion, also tried it, but

concludes: "The mind's flight alone will not bestow peace upon us."

Reflective minds rose to upper realms of religious domain and recorded their findings in 108 Upanishads (1,000 to 300 B. C.). They reached very high levels through intuitive philosophy and perceived the object of their search dimly. India's outstanding philosopher, Dr. Radhakrishnan concludes: "It is not easy to decide what they teach. Numerous are their suggestions of truth, various are their guesses of God; their writings contain too many hidden ideas, too many possible meanings, too rich a mine of fancies and conjectures."

To this unsuccessful attempt on the part of man to fly upwards unassisted, to this claim, that God can be known directly, out of man's own intuition and reason, the great Bombay convert Rahator says: "My search for God is as nothing compared with God's desire for me. It is not man who goes after God so much as God who goes after man. This is why I believe that the Gospel of Christ is the greatest news ever offered to India."

Of this upward flight of man, and the downward reach of God, do these pages speak.



*"Nor yet the thought of strength profound hath ever found out Thee."*

## II. The Mirage

*"Tat tvam asi" — That Thou art Thyself.*

"If the river be a mirage that I see,  
Then what need for me of a ford?"—*Tukaram.*

"Blind and alone my way I wend,  
The desert sands before, behind;  
Far from the haunts of sinful men.  
Here let me die, alone,—and blind."  
*Ancient Buddhist poem.*

"Dark, dark the far unknown, and closed the way!"  
—*Ekanath.*

"My soul is helpless,—I can not deliver myself!"  
—*Dadu.*

"O fool, to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders.  
O beggar, to come to beg at thy own door."  
—*Tagore.*

In its 5,000-year search for God India has paid a greater price than any other race on earth. In mountain-caves and deserts, in deep forests and monasteries, in ashrams and temples, in villages and along dusty roads, pilgrims and sadhus, ascetics and hermits, rishis and sages, sanyasis and gurus, mahatmas, priests and yogis, have pondered, meditated, and struggled in deep concentration and with great sincerity under voluntary privations, great physical austerities and material renunciations to

find a definite answer to their longing and seeking. Vague and dim were the first conceptions of the gods they discovered. After centuries of intense searching, intellectuals traveled on the highway of the "One, Abstract Reality," a neutral Absolute, Brahma,—without attributes, an impersonal, a non-personal IT. All else, said these philosophers and metaphysicians, is unreal, "lila"—sport of the teasing gods, and "maya"—illusory projections of the Absolute without any inherent existence or reality.

Centuries passed. The struggle to know the "One without a second" continued. The mind and intellect were taxed and strained to the extreme limit, for by his own effort man was determined to know. "Without reference to the clamant needs of the world around," with wife and child apparently forgotten, and frequently forsaken, to be more free to complete the quest, the intellectual seeker was lost in the rarefied atmosphere of cold, nebulous, metaphysical monism, merged—at least for a moment—into the supreme Soul.

Brahma, the nonpersonal, the neutral One, the Absolute, satisfied the intellect, the head, but not the heart. "Intellectually," said a modern Brahmin, reflecting the trend of his ancient forerunners, "I am drawn to monism, devotionally I am drawn to theism, to a God I can worship." The thirsty seeker saw only a mirage, illusion, nirvana before him; in his innermost soul there continued to lurk an unquieted restlessness, an unsatisfied heartfelt longing. Intellectually-conceived oneness with an impersonal



Reality, intellectually-conceived union with the Absolute did not satisfy seeking India's heart. "What is the use of salvation to me if it means absorption into the deity?" is Ramprasad's protest to cold Vedantism, "I like eating sugar, but I have no desire to become sugar." And Tulsidas confesses: "The worship of the Impersonal laid no hold of my heart." And pious Tukaram has no desire to be merged into the "unconscious Brahma like the dew-drop in the silent sea."

Meditating on his sacred tiger-skin, the seeker's thought soars beyond the mirage, wondering and wishing that there might be something, or some one, beyond to satisfy the heart as well as the head.

"Not Yoga's power, nor sacrifice,  
Not fierce austerity,  
Nor yet the thought of strength profound  
Hath ever found out Thee."

—*Tukaram.*



*"Oh, tell Thy name, where art Thou hidden?"*

### III. To the Unknown God

#### India's Cry

"WHO is the God to worship with oblation?"

—Rig Veda, 1500 B. C.

"He speaketh not, nor doth He smile ;

My love is like a statue made of spotless white  
marble.

My heart aches and aches. . . .

I desire, and He filleth me not.

Let my soul ache!

He speaketh not, nor doth He smile."—*Vir Singh.*

"From age to age I've longed and searched to find  
Thee ;

I seek my way alone, through darkness groping.

O tell Thy name. Where art Thou hidden?

All in vain I call Thee,—wilt Thou never hear me?

I cry—a bitter cry,—why thus silent, ah why?

Am I thus forgotten?—Left to die forsaken?

Sad my heart and swollen, for Thy grace still  
weeping.

Wilt Thou not hear and show Thy face though  
dimly

To me, a tired pilgrim seeking vainly?

Where hidden, Lord? Thyself reveal."

*(Compiled and translated from Hindu Scriptures and devo-  
tional literature of 1500 B. C. to 1600 A. D.—Can be sung to  
Korsakow's Song of India.)*

India's heart could not love a deity in the form of a philosophical and abstract IT, the product of metaphysical intellects. The doctrine of an all-pervading pantheism could not call forth worship and adoration, so rich and abundant in the soul of India. The seeker was not satisfied to be told: "Thou art IT," "For," said he, "how can I worship an impersonal IT of which I myself am a part?" India's heart continued to yearn for one WHOM she could love, and not for a WHAT into which to be submerged and lost. Monism advanced to deism,—there looms up a vague Being WHO was being dimly discerned and acknowledged. Theism was born. Religion became a matter of the emotions as well as of the reason and intellect, of love and devotion as well as of speculation. Ethics slowly gained in importance as personal attributes began to be ascribed to the gods. These could now be offended and also appeased. Sacrificial ceremonies were introduced and meticulously observed. Brahmins became all-powerful as possessors of the secrets and mysteries of intricate sacrifices. Gods could be coerced by them; in fact, the gods could not exist without the sacrificing priest. By virtue of intense meditation, penances and austerities, rishis, swamis and hermits became divinely powerful, able to threaten usurpation of the thrones of the gods themselves.

But the creation of many gods brought confusion; the creation of goddesses increased the rivalry. The deep desire for a personal god to love created an

abundance of them to be feared. Polytheism flourished.

Gradually an undercurrent manifested itself to elevate one from among the many gods to a primary position, to give him preference above all others. Now this one, now that one, became popular. One slowly emerged; his name varied, but the movement towards monotheism gained momentum.

Scriptures were written in which this one, now that one, gained allegiance. Monotheism was struggling against both pantheism and polytheism. Each protagonist advanced many reasons why his choice was to be preferred and worshipped above all others. Later leaders inserted and altered passages so that their special god might become the favored one. The mass of worshippers of the recently discovered personal gods continued to be confused. God had once been lost to them in pantheism, now He was lost to them again in polytheism.

In desperation and dismay the pious seeker leaves the temple so recently erected to the multitudinous gods, and continues his difficult pilgrimage in search for the "ONE who has no second." By his own effort the religious genius ascended Everest-heights, the highest he could attain by his own strength. "Here with pleading hands I stand waiting before Thee," "WHO is the God to worship with oblation?" Thus the end of his search is a question, not an answer. He has wandered far and climbed high on his religious pilgrimage, has done his utmost and achieved his highest in his upward reach.

While still asking the question so long unanswered, he sees in the far distance a ray of light and hope coming from on high, beyond Everest, the highest point he himself has been able to reach unassisted. "God became seeable, but was still very distant" —(Umrao Singh).

These first realizations of the great Supreme One are shown in the following quotations from the poets of the time:

"I do not know the direction in which to go!  
How can I enter? Whom can I speak to?  
What can I do? I know not anything.  
To whom can I speak? What can I do?  
I know not."—*Ramalinga Swami*

"I call again and again at Thy high gate,  
None hears me; empty is the house,—and desolate.  
Lost, lost, O God, am I  
Unless Thou help me, me who cry!"  
—*Tukaram*.

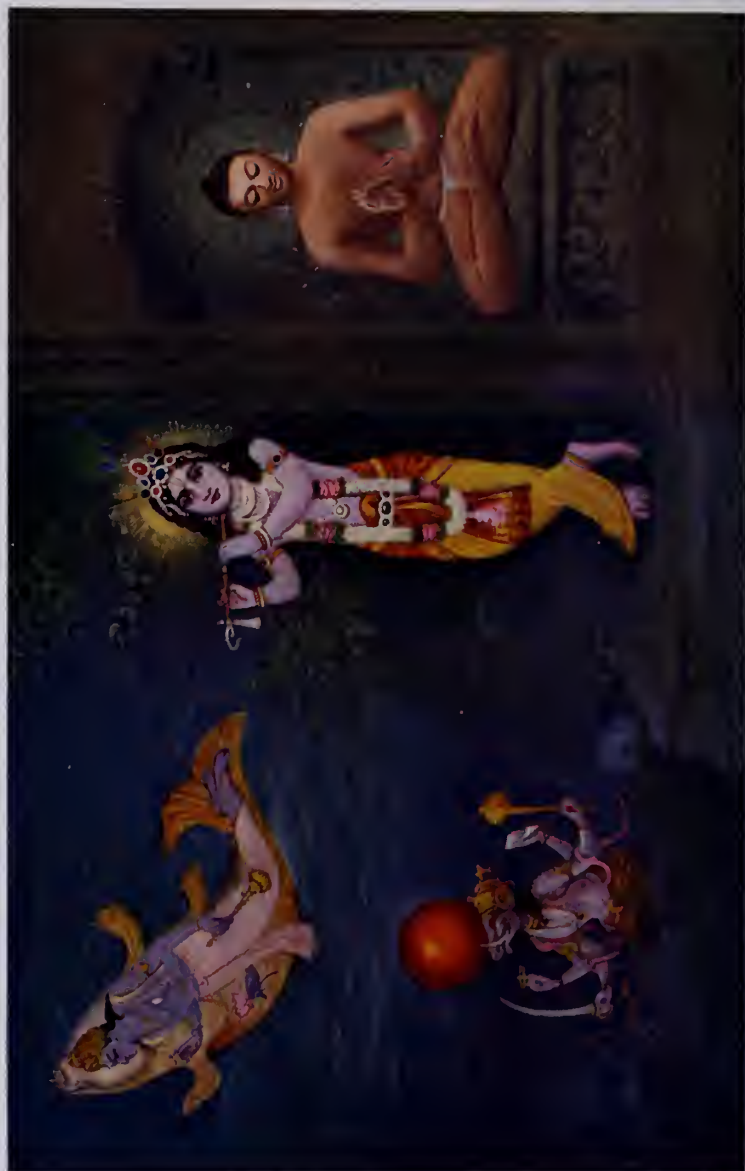
"I call my God, my God, vehemently thirsting,  
When will He come? My Beloved?  
When will He reveal Himself?"—*Dadu*.

"I seek whom I know not!  
He draws my soul;  
I go, and know not that I go!

“Through the shoreless dark  
A still small voice calls me;  
I grope my way unseeing, unthinking  
I know only that God is.

“Who shall tell me by what name to call Him?  
Where to find Him? I follow the scent.

“Ah, where shall I find Him  
To whom I have given my heart?”—*Bengali Hymn.*



*"How can I bring Thee before my eyes?"*



## IV. Heaven Suffers Violence

“How can I bring Thee before my eyes?  
I long to see Thy face;  
Sobs choke my throat;  
My eyes are wet with tears.  
How long still must I wait to see Thy face?”  
—*Tukaram*.

“How can I obtain a vision of the Lord  
in an embodied form, just as one beholds  
his parents, wife, or children?”—*Goyandka*.

### Incarnations

Having found a personal Deity, religious India now strives to bring this remote God down to earth, to make Him more real, to have Him near. To this end divine manifestations are sought, theophanies are created. In their eagerness to bring Him down, sages have taught and Hindus believe implicitly that on countless occasions God has assumed the form of a human being or a beast, according to His will. “To find Him, India fostered a double process: on the one hand the humanization of God, and called it incarnation, on the other the deification of man by raising a hero to the position of divinity.” (Chakarai.) Hence many of the incarnations are reminders of the early careers of gods to whom the past still clings too close.

Hinduism recognizes an infinite number of divine emanations, among them ten principal ones. "The series of incarnations begins with three in animal shape: the fish, the tortoise, and the boar (the first and third are shown in the illustration). It then passes through the intermediate form of one who has a man's body and a lion's head called Narsinha; then it enters the regions of more human conceptions: the Dwarf, a Brahmin of deformed humanity, Parasurama, Rama, Krishna; Buddha (who alone is the indubitably historical one in the series) and Kalki, the tenth and last, who is still to come." Rama and Krishna, probably two prehistoric heroes, are the most popular. The two books concerning them, the Ramayan and the Gita, are India's most widely read scriptures, for in Rama and Krishna, together with their consorts, Sita and Radha, they bring God in human forms closest to India's heart.

One is surprised to find that Hinduism includes Buddha in the list of incarnations to be worshipped; he who had nothing to say about God became "Devati-Deva, God of gods" (Radhakrishnan). This process again demonstrates India's desire for a God whom it could see. Not only is he placed among the gods, but also his mother, "who is set up as a Hindu goddess at Lumbini, just across the British Indian border in Nepal, and worshipped as such by the people." During the thousand years after Buddha founded his brotherhood (about 500 B. C.) his monasteries and the yellow robe of the Buddhist monks dominated the life of India from the Himalayas to

Cape Comorin. But this avatar (incarnation) lost his hold on India, the land of his birth. He was not God, come down from above. (See picture for Krishna and Buddha.)

There is one widely known and generally quoted Hindu scripture reference in connection with the above incarnations of Vishnu, Gita 4, 6-8: "Whenever there is a failure of righteousness, an uprising of unrighteousness, then I create myself: for the protection of the saints, for the destruction of the evil-doer, for the establishment of righteousness I appear, age after age." None of these incarnations is the turning-point of all history, says Brunner.

To complete their conception of God come down on earth, Hindus also created female counterparts to the above incarnations and worship them as equal. Images of them to serve as an aid, as stepping-stones for the humble seekers, were set up in the temples and worshipped. Idolatry was the result of pious India's desire to have God near, "seeable"; but few there are of the masses who pass beyond the stage of image-worship.

It is probable that the famous Hindu poet Tukaram (1608-49) was influenced by the New Testament message when he wrote the following lines; but whether so or not, they speak out of the heart of Mother India, who violently stormed the heavens to bring God down, to have Him near for her incurably religious soul to adore.

“Thou didst make cheap Thy greatness  
To take a human form, for us :

“Thou, Lord, The Absolute, the Eternal One,  
Didst pour Thy nature out,  
To fill a mould of human flesh ;

“And still Thou pourest forth Thy nature thus,  
Indwelling man, in love.”

## V. Is It He?

How can the seeker be assured that the acclaimed avatars are indeed incarnations of God? In their religious literature one repeatedly finds sentences like this: "The Lord Krishna appeared in the guise of Jayadeva."—"This simply confounds me, I do not know what the Lord means by this teasing sport of his," namely, by appearing in various unrecognized guises.—"Krishna appeared as a boy, but Jaya could not recognize who the cowherd boy was."—What shall they think and believe when again another proclaims his godhood, "Chaitanya murmured in ecstasy: 'I am He.'—Even during his lifetime he was considered an incarnation of the deity and elevated to the ranks of deity by his followers."

Not satisfied or convinced that any of the heralded multitudinous creatures who appear, and are proclaimed, as incarnations, do actually bring the One God in true form into their midst, Hindus necessarily turn hither and thither, ready to welcome any sign of a less illusive revelation from above. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." In these days their oft-deceived and -disappointed heart turns to another, to them a more satisfactory and perfect, incarnation: Gandhi. Although he resents the claim, there are countless ones whose deeply religious nature is content to worship him.

As early as 1931 there appeared this sentence in Mr. Hoyland's book "The Cross Moves East": "So

many of his countrymen not only admire and follow Mr. Gandhi, but even worship him as an incarnation of the Supreme Being." In 1934 a daily paper reported the following: "A hundred thousand men and women gathered at one place in Calcutta to have a 'Darshan' (view of adoration) of Gandhi, the Saint, each thinking his soul was sanctified by having seen and worshipped him even from a distance. He is a Thakur, a devata (a god)." During one of his fasts the same year, his prominent and intimate friend Mrs. Nehru wrote to him: "My beloved little Saint,—who will dare to question your transcendent sacrifice? 'To each his own destiny' says the French poet, and your destiny is to bring salvation to all who need redemption from the manifold ills of humanity." India has unanimously honored him with the title Mahatma, great spirit.

During a religious procession at Guntur several worshippers insisted on placing a large picture of Gandhi on the holy temple car next to the image of the idol; he was to be considered an equal of the indwelling deity in the idol, an incarnation of Vishnu. In 1936 a correspondent wrote to Mr. Gandhi: "I know that the people here worship stocks and stones, even when they say that they worship Ram and Krishna. And worship of these, however great they may be, does not inspire me. May I ask them to regard you as an incarnation of God, and worship you as I do?" To this Gandhi replied: "I am an idol of mud, break me, your incarnation, to pieces. Worship Rama and Krishna,

as I do." Another Hindu admirer, hearing this reply, said to Gandhi: "Because of this explanation they will regard you all the more as an incarnation."

In 1935 a group of 400 pilgrims came to him to have a "Darshan"; one said to him in broken English: "In North India no gods but Gandhi." Before departing the group gave him an offering of 256 rupees. The climax of deification is reached in the poem from the pen of an admiring Hindu who greets him, not as an incarnation of Vishnu, but as a second Christ:

"Hail to thee, Mahatmajee,  
The Christ of the day.  
Though imprisoned for thy nation's cause,  
How cheerful and gay.  
With sincerest greetings,  
All thy devotees pray  
At thy feet,  
O personified Christ of the day."

One can understand that a devout artist allows Ganesh, the God of Wisdom, to crown Gandhi as one of the gods, but one wonders by what process of thought this highly imaginative and exuberant Hindu poet turns away from the popular incarnations Ram and Krishna and, when seeking to pay the highest tribute to the newly created god, Gandhi, substitutes the name of Christ!—And the uncertain millions continue to ask: "Who is the God to worship with our oblation?"



*"An image made like unto  
corruptible man."*



## VI. One Thousand and One

India was seeking one who could reveal God completely and indubitably. Since none of the previously proclaimed incarnations seems to have fulfilled this hope satisfactorily, confused India looks expectantly for yet another: Kalki or Kalanki, the tenth and final incarnation of Vishnu. But, believing that God, "manifests Himself in one thousand and one ways and forms," how can the seeker know with certainty that it is He? The following quotations from sincere seekers reveal the difficulty: "God is like a chameleon that constantly changes his colour, an ever-varying God."—"The Lord appeared to him as a mad man, but as ill luck would have it, he failed to recognize Him."—"Lord, I have not been able to understand your apparition. Even the gods and the deities do not recognize you when deluded by your illusion. Now pray, let me have a true vision of your image, and thus bring peace to my perturbed soul." (Saint Govind.)—"I asked my guru (spiritual preceptor), but he became as bewildered as myself. My life became dark, my days full of seeking, my nights one long, oft-repeated question. But no answer could I find. I was confounded and grew pale, and could not eat." (Tyabjee.)—Another hungering one approaches the "Sage who never speaks," for, people say, he has found God and fears to speak lest he lose Him again; the seeker requests an answer, only to find that: "Its mystic vagueness charms me as a piece of poetry,

but blurs me when I look for a useful contribution.” Sadhu Banerjee says: “The Pundits are so wordy that it is hard to talk to them. I am not debating with them at all, but I often ask them one question: ‘Have you found God?’ At this point they are bankrupt.”

Over a period of several decades Mrs. Besant attempted to create a new synthetic World Teacher, a Hindu Messiah, and presented her protégé Krishnamurti to the public. Like all arrogance which usurps the prerogative of God, the attempt failed, her world organization, the Order of the Star, was dissolved in 1929.

In 1924 a person arose in South India to answer the question definitely, for he claimed to be the final and true Kalanki incarnation. “A Mohammedan Maulana Siddique, tattooed the marks of Kalanki on his body and appeared as that avatar in Tirpur. The mischief could only be detected when he had already done his nefarious work of converting thousands.” More confusion for the pious was to follow. It was not long before another was heralded as the final revelation. Well does the Alvar poet confess: “Hungering for Thee, many a strange web of life have I woven for ages.” The following are verbatim excerpts of a story as it appeared in a Hindu-edited English paper August 1937:

“The whole atmosphere was surcharged with an enthusiasm and expectation of having Darshan (adoring view) of one who manifests Himself in one thousand and one ways to appease the hunger



*Kalanki avatar "in flowing robes of  
choicest silk."*

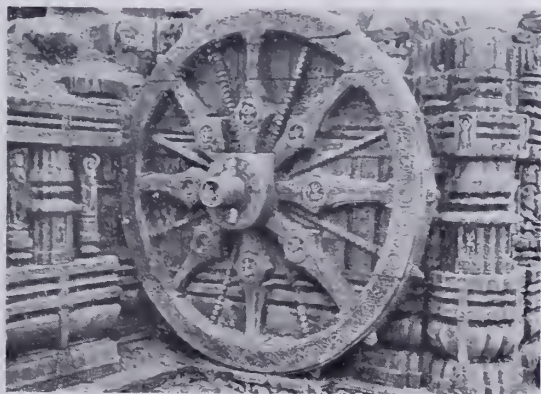
of his devotees. For a considerable time, the whole town awaited with childlike eagerness and innocence to have a glimpse of the Almighty, for it was heralded that God has already appeared as the incarnation of Kalki and has condescended graciously to give His Darshan to his devotees of Raipur. That anxiously awaited hour materialized when Shree Bholanathji, also known as Shreenathji, arrived from Shillong, a far east town in India.

Since his arrival hundreds of people flock to have his glimpse, both in the morning and in the evening, and to hear him. His Holiness is staying as the guest of Seth Balkishan Nathani, in his spacious bungalow near the District Court. Shree Bholanathji is said to be the incarnation of god Kalki and is so worshipped by his devotees. He is 35 years of age and is handsome in appearance. He speaks in low tone, but with becoming grace. With winning manner and smiling face he has captured many a heart and left an indelible impression in the hearts of devotees. The way in which Shree Bholanath lives is nothing short of princely living. He dresses in flowing robes of pure and choicest silk. His meals are rich in variety. In short, the great servant of the earth lives and moves in an atmosphere of ease and comfort. I have had several occasions to attend the gatherings come to have his Darshan and had opportunities to hear the rustic and simple but all-believing folks uttering sentiments of mixed feelings. Pleaders (lawyers) were captivated by him. He is an enigma and a mystery to many, though his devotees find in him divine inspiration and spiritual attainment."

When invited to appear in public debate and to prove the claim of his worshippers he mildly denied being an incarnation, but refused to be drawn into a discussion of the matter. He left for North India, and planned to visit America.—And many continue to ask: "Is it really He?"

## VII. Heaven Recedes, Hope Is Deferred

Because God-realization occurred so seldom, because man's search for God and his attempt to bring Him down among men failed, because his aspirations were not fulfilled, India demanded an explanation from her spiritual giants. In the childhood of her search these leaders replied that the gods were jealous of their domain and even prevented saints from reaching the heavenly abode. Demons also were lurking along the way to cause the pious to fall by the wayside. Pundits included woman as a retarding cause. Philosophers said that the material body is the enemy of the soul's flight. Others expanded the thought and taught that all existence is evil. Men withdrew to deserts, jungles and moun-



tains, away from the material world in order to castigate and subdue the material body which was hindering the soul from reaching a union with God. But self-torture did not help to achieve the goal. There must be yet another hidden cause.

Brooding philosophers claimed to have discovered it at last: the law of "karma," according to which man reaps the results of every evil thought, word or deed, if not in this life, then in later existences. Hence, they explained, it is necessary to be reborn again and again to suffer all the deserved punishments for past and present sins. Finally, after an endless cycle of rebirths the soul may become purified and worthy of reaching the gods. This doctrine of reaping the fruits of one's actions and the resulting belief in transmigration was a convenient way of answering the question regarding delayed union with God. It deferred the hope of salvation (which to them means a release from the evil of rebirths and existence), to a date millenniums hence, in the far, distant future.

They explained: men are born in low castes because of sins unatoned for in past lives; women are unfortunately born as women for a similar reason; men become poor, sick or suffer reverses; women become widows for the same reason, sins in this or past lives. When efforts were made to ameliorate the conditions of fifty million untouchables, a group of twice-born Brahmins protested to the Viceroy: "Untouchables are the people who on account of their own karma in past lives were born in

communities, families and professions so unclean as to be regarded as untouchables by caste Hindus. They can not be turned from their sinful ways by any external agency or by any secular legislation." Consequently one reads a news item like this, for high caste Hindus are also subject to rebirth: "Half a million persons bathed in the sacred Ganges at the auspicious moment to wash away their and their ancestors' sins, thereby to ensure a more prosperous rebirth." A Hindu religious magazine proclaims sadly: "All other gains are of but brief duration and are lost again inevitably as the Cosmic Wheel turns through the unresting cycles in never ending change." And continues:

"Only while turns this WHEEL invisible,  
No pause, no peace, no staying-place can be;  
Who mounts may fall, who falls will mount:  
The spokes go round unceasingly."

And again: Shree Bhagvan (god) says: "Only those people can obtain my vision who lead a sinless life through millions of births." Even "to be reborn in heaven is only to tarry for a while in a place of bliss, from which presently one may fall to earthly or bestial or even lower forms of life and suffering." Thus the wheel of rebirths pursues its course of unmeaning revolutions, advancing nowhere. Yet the pious pilgrim seeks ways to cut short the number of rebirths: "The devout Hindu believes that for every hair of his which finds rest in the (holy) Ganges he is released from 10,000 rebirths." The





*"Who can stay the wheel of rebirths?"*



hopelessness of it all caused a South Indian poet to cry out:

“How many births are passed I can not tell,  
How many yet to come, no man can say,  
But this alone I know, and know full well:  
That pain and grief embitter all the way.”

Near Puri is a massive Sun Temple, built in the form of a huge chariot (1200 A. D.). Wheels ten feet high carved in stone seem to want to speed the heavy chariot on its cycles of revolutions. Felloe, spokes and hub are ornamented with circles, wheels within wheels, emblematic of the wheel of life, symbolic of the countless rounds of rebirths. How can man break this eternal, recurring cycle? How be freed from these earthly, material, sin-caused existences and be enabled to approach the presence of God? And when, they ask, may this take place? for “The particles of dust of the earth can be counted, but not the number of our countless births.” “The Indian knows very well that Brahma’s wheel revolves slowly; he also knows that it never ceases to revolve, and that man’s restless, impetuous will can never cause it to turn faster,” (as if it were in his power the sooner to end its revolution). *Mrs. Das.*

For thirty centuries this belief in karma and its resulting rebirths has acted as a drag, a heavy weight, on India’s flight. The heavy, cumbersome wheel of rebirths rolls on eternally; the greater the human effort, the farther away does heaven seem

to recede; the outlook appears gloomy: to be born, suffer and die only to be reborn; birth, agony, death and transmigration, thus the wheel keeps on turning. On and on, relentlessly, unmercifully it turns and turns; none can stop its revolutions, none can guide it, the gods themselves are subject to its laws; endlessly it continues to revolve in its circuit. Karma will have its dues; the tired pilgrim can never know when his cycles of rebirths will end, when his wheel will cease to turn. God is as far away as ever, hope is deferred indefinitely.

## VIII. A Modern Substitute for God

Thwarted and starved, the religious instinct now seeks another object of worship. God and "institutions once considered sacred and essential to Hinduism are crashing." Uncertain about the soul's future prospects,—finding no way out of the many blind alleys into which man had strayed in his self-made plan of salvation,—disgusted with the many mythological accretions,—unwilling to preserve the eternally good and to discard the worthless,—yet ever unconsciously recognizing and expressing the soul's restlessness until it find rest in Him, many (but by no means the majority) begin to seek spiritual relief by worshipping the modern god: Nationalism. The final goal is now not so much the other world as the present one. This extreme "turn-about" may be partly due to Hinduism's neglect in the past of men's welfare in this lifetime. Whatever may be the cause of this sudden change, the fact now is that gifts and adoration are being offered before this new idol. Its temple is a place of refuge for those who have discarded the gods of their fathers and also for countless others who gropingly add another idol to their already overcrowded pantheon of gods.

Thus devotion once accorded to the gods and temples is being transferred to Nationalism. "With many the religion of patriotic passion has taken possession of the empty shrine and established over their emotional natures its dangerous dominion.

Nationalism has entered into possession of the educated mind of India and has taken the place of religion, if indeed we should not rather say that it has itself become a religion." The elevation of this new god has caused tens of thousands of women to come forth from the thousand-year-old purdah of zenana prisons in order to enter the front ranks of public life and service; countless rupees are placed at Gandhi's feet for the national cause; with religious fervor youths have dedicated revolvers to the modern god before assassinating foreign officers; in the remotest villages the flag of the spinning-wheel is carried in processions to hail India's new day; tens of thousands made pilgrimages, not to holy mountains, but to prisons as heroes of the new religion. Youths are asking skeptically: Is the old religion consistent with national progress? The long neglected fifty million depressed people are being wooed by various political parties. An army of 300,000 persons made a pilgrimage to Haripura, the 1938 meeting place of the National Congress Party; 75,000 rupees were lavished on the temporary road leading to the temporary camp for which 750,000 rupees had been spent.—Utopias are being promised in the name of the new god.—The writer heard a cabinet minister advise his audience: "Obey the Congress Party's orders, and even should Brahma (god) himself come down from heaven and say the contrary, do not listen to him."

In Benares, the holiest city of Hinduism, a temple was dedicated by Mr. Gandhi in 1936 which cost

100,000 rupees. It is called "Bharat Mata Mandir," Mother India Temple. Visitors and worshipers are requested to remove their shoes before entering the sacred temple of this modern god. In the place of an idol or the usual image of god or goddess there has been placed a large relief map of India in marble, 30 by 30 feet, made of 762 pieces of marble. According to all prevailing custom and tradition it suggests and implies worship of Mother India,—Nationalism raised to a religion.—The Hindu editor of a weekly paper wrote of the 1937 President of the Congress Party, Mr. J. Nehru, as follows: "In this land of religion, Karma or Kismet has planted one who proclaims that he has no faith in, and no use for religion." Imprisoned six times for translating his religion of Nationalism into active opposition to the British Government he has dedicated his wealth and life completely to the modern god. Others are following in his steps,—and herein lies the great danger for India; the assumption that nationalism, without God, can save India from all its woes and sufferings, its poverty and diseases, the ills of caste and illiteracy, its divisions and communal frictions. Prof. Mukerjee says that "this political upheaval is nurtured in the soil of enthusiasm in which there is no place for God. *Unaided*, man can not set forth either on the quest for truth or on the magnificent undertaking of refashioning the world. He needs some other power than himself, a combination of the determination of the dictator and of the tenderness of a friend, found only in

Jesus Christ who follows wayward man with His relentless love."

Nationalism has noticeably awakened inherent virtues in the breast of many,—at the same time, just because it is a man-made god it has also intensified latent vices, a wide-spread decline in discipline among students, communal frictions, class and caste hatreds, party strifes, personal and provincial selfishness. Like all false gods, nationalism is not ushering in the Kingdom of God, nor is it changing the hearts of men. This separative idolatry of Nationalism is about to react upon the West, the place of its origin, for Gandhi's party now proposes to allow no foreign business enterprise in India in which Indians do not hold the controlling power.

This modern god becomes divisive in the land of its adoption. In the interest of nationalism and unity Gandhi fasted twenty-one days, thereby hoping to cause the factious Mohammedans and Hindus to cease their animosities and selfish job-seeking machinations. These worshippers of the modern god may be reminded of the clarion call made not long ago by one who also sacrificed much out of love for his motherland, Golak: "The hope of a united India within is Christ, because He came on earth to establish a Kingdom of God. We are enjoined to take up the Cross, the symbol of sacrifice, self-denial and service; to serve and not to unsheath our sword to rule or to rob and exploit. This is the key that will bring the races in India to understand each other, to tolerate each other, to fraternize and

to love.”—Tilak, second to none in his devotion to India, also gives forceful expression to the correct underlying motive for true nationalism. “Bran shall I eat, and rags shall I wear for the sake of thy love, my Motherland. My body will I sacrifice, my life will I lay down in thy service, my noble land. In this I do nothing more than follow my Master Jesus Christ, my Friend, thy Friend, the Friend of all.”



*"To distracted India there comes a message of hope."*



## IX. Immanuel — God with Us

### Christmas Day

“I bow to you in your day of birth, O Christ!

The beloved Son of God,  
The saintliest of the Saints.

Light came from beyond the darkness of death,  
The song of victory arose.

Your death gave everlasting life to men,  
You bridged the gulf between heaven and earth,  
And glorified the world by your advent.”

—*S. Datta.*

“When wilt thou reveal thyself?” To this one cry which runs through all devotional and autobiographical history, both ancient and modern, India is receiving an answer. She seemed not to be aware of the fact that the loving God is as anxious to meet man as man can ever be to know and to meet with Him. In all the highest flights of speculation, intuition and meditation India also seems not to have learned that in all personal relationships it is the higher, the superior, the more powerful, the perfect one, the knowing one who takes the initiative to reveal himself to the lower, the inferior one: king to subject, teacher to pupil, parent to child, employer to employee, also God to man. Much though the lower one may desire to know and to fellowship with the higher one, it is only when the latter wills to reveal himself, to make himself

known, to share himself, that it takes place. Hinduism attempted to storm heaven and failed. "The personal God is known only when He makes Himself known" (Brunner). After a long life of prayer Rahator "came to see that his own search for God was as nothing compared with God's desire for him." N. V. Tilak worked for a wealthy friend who "spent thousands of rupees in purchasing almost all the Vedic and philosophic literature of the Hindus available. In this lake of speculative thought and fiction I was plunging and swimming for three years. On the train one day a stranger gave me a New Testament with the remark, 'study the life of Jesus and you will surely be a Christian'." He became India's most famous Christian poet, and at the end of his life he testified: "I have often experienced that it is not man who goes after God so much as God going after man in love. He seeks me and I must never be such a fool as to believe that it is I who seek Him."

Hinduism is beginning to doubt the revealing ability of Vishnu's ten incarnations. It is interesting to note how D. S. Sarma in his "Primer of Hinduism" critically eliminates them: "The incarnations of Vishnu are intended to give only an IMAGINATIVE representation of God's help rendered to man at different stages of his evolution." A Brahmin pundit told the writer: "I do not believe in the historicity of the avatars, they are mere allegory," and he, like Sarma, claims to be orthodox. Brahmin converts recognize that the true nature of

God can not be understood, His character can not be known by elevating man to Godhood, but only when God reaches down and embodies himself in human form to "tabernacle among us." Studying the life of Him who "became flesh" they become convinced that "he who seeth Him seeth the Father." God's historic entry into the world fully meets their desire.

It is equally interesting to note in biographical and autobiographical statements of high caste converts how the previously accepted incarnations recede as pale shadows into oblivion. The famous Sadhu Sundar Singh confesses that "It is useless to look to Krishna for salvation for he has declared that in all appearances in the world he came to destroy sinners rather than to save them," and adds "Christ is my Saviour, He is my life, His presence gives me peace amidst persecution. In prison He is with me. To all eternity I shall never forget His glorious and loving face. Now I have no desire for wealth, position and houses, for Christ dwells in my heart,—not only in my head." "Golak the Hero" supports this claim: "In Christ I have felt the living presence of God." Chakkarai, who himself "at one time most devoutly worshipped Ram and Krishna," writes in his book "Jesus the Avatar": "Ram and Krishna were temporary and passed away from the world after having done their respective duties, the one through plunging into a river, and the other killed by a hunter."

Others, who let not a waking hour pass without repeating the names of Ram and Krishna, make no reference to them at all after having found Him in "whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." We ask Tilak, who in spite of continued persecution remained a loyal and fruitful follower of Christ for 25 years, until his death, "Did you indeed see Him?" He answers:

"Ye ask, and so I tell ye I am bold;  
Yea, with these eyes did I the Christ behold,  
Awake, not sleeping, did upon Him gaze,—  
And at the sight stood tranced with amaze."

Let Chundra Leela the Brahmin priestess speak: "I have done and suffered all that could be required of mortal, by God or man, and yet without avail. There is nothing in Hinduism or I would have found it. Hearing Dr. Phillip's sermon I found that for which I had long sought." And henceforth for thirty years this former priestess braving all persecution and ridicule retraces the steps of her former pilgrimages among the temples, shrines and sacred rivers to proclaim to her disciples that "in none other is there salvation." When Pandita Ramabai, recipient of the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal, left this earth less than two decades ago, India's great leader of the woman's movement, Mrs. Naidu, acclaimed her to be "the first Christian woman to be enrolled in the calendar of Hindu saints." Ramabai herself gives the reason. "For more than three

years after the death of our parents and elder sister my little brother and I wandered from place to place, visiting many temples, bathing in many rivers, fasting and performing penances, worshipping gods, trees, animals and Brahmins. We had walked more than 4,000 miles on foot without comfort of any sort; but the gods did not help us. I searched all the Hindu scriptures, modern poets, listened to orthodox high caste men, all were agreed on one matter: 'All women are bad and can not get salvation.' My heart was hungering, I was desperately in need. After reading John 4 I realized that no one but Christ could transform and uplift down-trodden womanhood. I was drawn to Christ and was satisfied. He has thus far never failed me during 38 years of discipleship, nor has He failed during 26 years to supply the needs of 2,000 orphan girls and widows who have come to me for refuge."

In his autobiography "Fifty Years Pilgrimage of a Convert," Mr. A. Pillai refers to two other outstanding Brahmin converts. "They were attracted by the simple life and beautiful character of Christ, which are in distinct contrast to those of various avatars and emanations who were mostly selfish and cruel and exhibited in a marked degree human failings and weaknesses as seen from the Puranas. Christ was to them on a plane higher, purer and nobler than that of any teacher, saint, rishi or avatar that Hinduism could show. What appealed to them most was the doctrine of reconciliation, of

mercy and justice, as expounded by the Christian theologies."

K. T. Paul, for many years successful Indian National Secretary of the Y. M. C. A., remembers God's gift to India: "A recognition of the supreme beauty and strength of Jesus Christ is nothing to be wondered at in India. And when the present (political) conflicts shall be a memory and India comes to reckon in proper worth the contribution of the West she will reckon this as the most fruitful and the most excellent: the introduction of Jesus Christ to her mind and heart." India now knows the "God to whom to offer her oblation," Christ, God come down from above, who is occupying the solitary throne in India's heart:

"To Thee I offer child and wife,  
My home and all, my worldly life;  
To Thee this body, too, I bring,  
To Thee surrender everything.

"My very self henceforth is Thine;  
O take it Lord, for Thou art mine,  
Brother beloved and King divine."

*Tilak.*





*"The Cross is the attraction."*



## X. Love's Frontier

“Men of Wisdom! Tell me where you find such Love, and I will sit and listen! Did any of Vishnu's ten incarnations die to save another?”

(This was the usual reply made to Brahmin objectors by the Christian convert Ganga Dhor Sarawjee during his thirty-eight years of preaching to Hindus.)

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“There is a statue of ‘Jesus on the Cross’ which is capable of moving the stoniest heart. Gandhi stood before it for several minutes, went near it, went in the rear of it, performed, so to say, a Pradakshina of it and said: ‘One can't help being moved to tears’.”

(Written by his secretary, Mr. Desai, for Mr. Gandhi's paper “Young India” when they visited Rome on their return trip from the London Round Table Conference.)

“In polytheistic religions the guilt of sin never pressed heavily upon the minds of men because among the millions of gods and goddesses naturally there existed some whose sense of morality, righteousness and sin was not as keen as that of the advanced sections of the worshippers themselves. Man's loathing for sin increases in proportion to his idea of the holiness of God” (Santamurti). Although lacking a clear conception of a holy God India did not show that the sense of guilt was ab-

sent. Among other things it gave birth to the idea of revengeful gods, much to be feared. But how evade the results of sin? "In Hinduism man in his sin is left to himself alone in the hopeless migrations from birth to birth. The last aim of this endless chain is to remove the burden of all sin, and not even Krishna offers to shorten the migration of man's millions of rebirths" (Staehlin). The rigid doctrine of karma and rebirths was born out of a consciousness that man's sinfulness is real and that punishment is inevitable. All metaphysical rationalizations that sin is merely negative, a shadow due to lacking goodness, did not soothe the guilty conscience. Peace of mind and union with God were as far away as ever. An ultimate effort to be freed from this sense of guilt was made through mental gymnastics by which the Hindu concluded: "Apart from God nothing exists, I am God," hence "As the reed burns if thrown into the fire, so are all sins of him burned who knows this."—Mr. S. Sarma advocates another method in his "Primer of Hinduism."—"We can get rid of our sins *most easily* by expanding our souls. This creates in us a virtuous disposition and increases our spiritual power which burns up all sin." This is an echo from Buddha of 2,500 years ago: "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge." In spite of all efforts and explanations conscience would not be quieted; multitudinous methods to atone for evil were devised: self-inflicted punishments, self-torture, austerities, self-mortification,

sacrifices, asceticism, fasting, pilgrimages. Again it was man making his own plans without the help of God. Even the law of karma itself, devised to explain the existence of evil to a guilty conscience, became itself an oppressive burden; the cure proved to be as burdensome as the disease itself. After bemoaning the fact that he had suffered sufficient punishment by having been "reborn in worms and moths, kings and beggars," Kabir cries out: "O God, have mercy on us. We have grown weary, make us now whole." Thus the appeal now rises to the throne of God. For fifty centuries it had dreamed of divine incarnations, but Hinduism had never even dreamed of a divine atonement.

"In the hour when Jesus died, God was most to be seen and found on earth in Him who hung upon the Cross."

The Cross cuts across all that Hinduism had planned for its own salvation and union with God. Only after intense struggles can a Hindu accept its implications. He must revise all his ideas about God, sin, karma, rebirths, and other fundamental doctrines of Hinduism.—Buddhist monks noted the changed life of their fellow-priest Weerasuriya after his conversion; they asked him how he did it. As a reply he quoted his motto: "The Cross is the Attraction." But they said: "No, you have been able by *your own effort* to give up the five sins prohibited by Buddha." To this his father, also a recent convert, gave the reply: "In this village Buddhism has existed for 2,000 years, is there one

person able to witness that he has by his own efforts and exertions freed himself from the five sins prohibited by Lord Buddha?" None came forth to testify, all remained silent, looking at each other.

"Rahator saw plainly that Christ's redeeming love was the key to unlock the closed door of the pariah's heart and without any thought of himself he went out and saved and served. A new love to mankind possessed him. One night in the jungle Rahator showed his brigand friends three crosses standing on a bare hillside, and the King of men in the middle crucified between two robbers. After a while the men broke up and slipped away silently to their haunts in the caves and the hills. There was one who remained, their brigand chief, a great swarthy fellow, bronzed by sun and wind. He knelt by Rahator's side, with cries of distress, and with those scalding tears of penitence whereby men of this mould often pass to the peace and strength of a Christ-controlled life. In a voice strangely subdued he said: 'Great God, who is a King like unto Thee? What a royal pardon for the prisoner and the outcaste, and especially a robber like me!' After his conversion Raj, the brigand chief, returned to what had been their robbers' cave and sang: 'Lover eternal; Lover eternal. Thou didst come down patiently looking for me. Giving Thy life, Thou didst ransom my life.' This former brigand chief was instrumental in bringing many others to the same conviction. Rahator has proved in India, as Kagawa in Japan and Aggrey in Africa, that nothing else

attracts people like the preaching of Christ and Him crucified."

Sadhu Sundar Singh can speak with authority: "From my fourteen years' experience of life as a sadhu for Jesus Christ I can say with confidence that the Cross will bear those who bear the Cross until it lifts them up to heaven in the presence of the Saviour."—The Cross completely altered Tilak's previous Hindu outlook. He now makes a vow and faithfully keeps it: "Like Thee, O Christ, I will remain poor. Like Thee I will serve. Like Thee I will be the friend of all, the enemy of none. Like Thee I will ever be ready to be nailed to a cross. Like Thee I will strive to do fully the will of God. Like Thee I will love all mankind." The Cross helped Ramabai, the mother to thousands of needy, friendless girls and widows: "The Lord first showed me the sinfulness of sin, then His blessed Son upon the Cross. O the love, the unspeakable love of the Father for me. I had not merited this love, but that was the very reason why He showed it toward me."—

The Cross continues to become a part of Hindu thinking. K. C. Sen says: "The mighty artillery of His love He levelled against me, and I was vanquished and fell at His feet."—Sir N. Chandravarkar tells us: "I am a Hindu. In my bedroom I have a picture of Christ Crucified where I can look daily upon it. I believe Christ to be unique in the power to save and help men. No one else ever did for suffering, oppressed humanity what He did."—An

orthodox Hindu confesses: "We can laugh at you missionaries, we can laugh at the Indian Christians, we can laugh at the Church, but we can not laugh at Christ on the Cross."—Dr. Radhakrishnan, exchange professor of Hindu philosophy in Europe, asks: "What does Christianity ultimately mean if it is not the power of love and suffering to remake society? This is the method of Christian revolution. The Cross is not an offense to the Hindu, but it is the great symbol of the redemptive reality of God. It shows us love rooted in self-sacrifice."—In 1913 a leading Hindu in Poona was forced from the National Congress platform for referring to Christ; 12 years later, in 1925, the president of the same political party read the crucifixion story from the Gospel of John before 5,000 non-Christian members of the same party. When the party met a year later two large framed pictures were displayed on the platform, one of Gandhi and one of Christ with a crown of thorns. And after Gandhi had fasted 21 days to bring peace between Hindus and Mohammedans he asked a Christian friend to sing the song he liked so well: "When I survey the wondrous Cross."—

In Him, the Crucified One, India is seeing God, who loves until it hurts; in the Cross it finds "Love's Frontier," the limit to which God is willing to go to win man unto Himself.

## XI. Christ Victorious

The doctrines that the material world is evil, that man is God, that there is no such thing as innocent suffering, that man must be reborn endless times, that existence is an illusion, and other similar beliefs leading to fatalism and pessimism can hardly be expected to create the conception of a Kingdom of God on earth and with it bring a cheering hope for mankind. Human heroes raised to godhood could not provide the dynamic to usher in a "satyayug" (reign of righteousness and truth), but rather only promise a "kali yug," an age of deterioration and evil. A Krishna come to "destroy the wicked" and save the good could hardly inspire love to help and save sinners. A belief in karma, implying that one person can not improve the condition of another, could not consistently lead to the establishment of hospitals and charitable institutions. A religion whose avatars sanctioned, yea, encouraged the structure of caste, the splitting up of mankind into several thousand water-tight compartments, may speak most poetically about the unity of life prevailing in the universe, but could hardly be expected to lay the foundation for the brotherhood of man. A system that makes God a neutral It without attributes could hardly create a society in which individuality and personality are highly valued. A philosophy that ascribes sacredness to beasts equally with man, that donates money more willingly to a home for aged cows than to a



hospital for fellowmen, can hardly become enthusiastic about the uplift of untouchables. A system that denies marriage to a virgin widow and sanctions polygamy for a man can hardly be asked to support equal rights for woman. Brahmin priests who perform child marriage ceremonies (Gandhi calls such men monsters) can not be establishers of child welfare centers. Lately a textbook appeared on Hinduism for youths instructing them as follows: "Hindu scriptures constantly say that existence is evil. We look upon the world as mainly evil." The hope held out to them is not very inspiring: "All that most of us can do in this evil world is to acquire a *little* cleanliness in an ocean of dirt, a *little* righteousness in an ocean of sin, a *little* beauty in an ocean of ugliness, a *little* love in an ocean of selfishness."—In short, Hinduism, sincerely "other-worldly," each person working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, oblivious of others, although by no means bankrupt, can not out of itself establish the "Kingdom of God."

Here in the midst of this deeply religious Mother India, proudly calling herself the "spiritual mother of mankind," here in the midst of her 350 million children stands the Church presenting the historic, majestic figure of the crucified and resurrected Christ who offers to reveal Him whom they have long waited for. Around Him are gathered a modest group to whom He says: "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." What a promise! What a claim! How



can it be? Paul states it briefly: "Seeing that in the wise providence of God the world through its philosophy could reach no sufficient knowledge of God, it was God's good pleasure through the preaching, that the wise men mock at, to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1: 21).

In spite of opposition, persecution and haughty contempt the Church continues to preach this Gospel, the one power unto salvation. In thousands of the 722,500 villages one finds mud-walled chapels, brick churches, lonely pastors, evangelists and congregations, preaching and living the Christ, the Way of life. In 1891 there were 2,284,000 Christians, an increase of 22.6% over the previous decade; in 1931 the number grew to 6,820,000, an increase of 32.5%, while the rate of increase of the population was one-third of that figure. But it is not primarily in numbers that the Church reveals the power of the living Christ. The Indian Church can point with pride to its heroes and heroines: Goreh, Chatterjee, Banerjee, Golak, Pillai, Appasamy, Sundar Singh, Chitambar, Datta, Azariah, Paul, Rudra, Ramabai, and hosts of other outstanding leaders, sons and daughters, giants of the young Church. With no less pride does it present the millions who have come from among the middle and the oppressed classes.

As one of the proofs that He is the "Expected One" Christ said: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." This the Church is doing, and it is to her credit that the majority of the present estimated 7,304,000 Christians (one out of every



*"The Christian Church represents the supreme attraction of Christ to the Indian mind."*

fifty of the population) are from among the lowest of low. Seeing the marked change taking place among them the Bombay Government placed 1,300 members of a criminal tribe in the care of an Indian pastor to do what the Government police and officers could not accomplish. And the Church did it. A Hindu prime minister paid a high tribute to the Church when he said: "You take these downtrodden people and you really seem to make men of them. My experience in dealing with them is that those who have become Christians are honest and reliable men." The effect of changed, clean, educated, honest, energetic, peaceful, sober, converts from among the untouchable groups on higher groups has long been visible. Bishop Azariah says: "Beneath all the reasons that have led some 26,000 caste people Christwards in the Telegu speaking area during the last five to ten years, there lies the attractive power of the life of the Christians of outcaste origin." Capitalizing this good reputation of low caste converts it was found that in one city over one hundred sweepers, posing falsely as Christians, received good positions as cooks and house servants in the better families.

At the rate of over 3,000 a week they are entering the Church from among the bottom strata of Hindu society. Through contact with the living, loving, dynamic, and holy person of Christ, new hope is awakened in them, fear and inferiority complex vanish, beliefs and attitudes change, character grows, cultural and economic improvements follow.

Weak though it may be, the Church encourages, nurtures and shepherds these lowly seekers in their new life. Asked about the greatest gift he had received as a convert one of them replied: "That sacred thing called human personality." This may be the secret of the following fact: "Children of low caste converts are being educated and are becoming the teachers of Brahmins, respected and loved. They have become pastors of churches, officers of municipalities, bishops of our churches, heads of our institutions, chairmen of assemblies. Women of outcastes have become pioneers in female education; at one time Christian girls outnumbered the Hindu girls in Normal schools and classes for nurses." This revolutionary progress among low-caste converts continues to attract the upper classes. "There are thousands today scattered all over India who secretly or openly accept Jesus Christ as their great example and Saviour." (A. T. Dass). "The Christian Church in India represents the supreme attraction of Christ to the Indian mind and consequently to Hinduism." (P. Chenchiah). "Christianity has effected in Hinduism a transition of values. It has put a new content into the Hindu idea of God, set up a new standard of moral and spiritual life, and given an ideal for individuals and communities to live and work for. The change that has come over Hindu ways of thinking and living during the last century is nothing short of a miracle. In Christ, India has found a new reality, a new life, a new way, a new truth, and a new light." (C. E. Abraham.)

Can the following description of an oil painting recently exhibited in London by an Indian artist be prophetic of the fate of India's modern god, Nationalism, and of the future of the Church of Christ? "The picture most discussed is the 'Triumph of Non-cooperation' representing Mr. Gandhi in his favourite attitude seated on a low pedestal with Mr. S. Ali and Pundit Motilal Nehru standing by. In front is a bonfire in which is burning not foreign cloth, but the culture of India, namely literature, music and art. In the background are shown a mosque and a temple both dislodged and tumbling, but the spire of a Christian church still erect."



## XII. India's Search Rewarded

Since the above was written, a brief report of the conversion of an orthodox Brahmin, Santamurti, has come to hand. It is characteristic of the experience of thousands of searchers after God, and since his own description epitomizes the experience of so many others, it may serve as a fitting conclusion and summary of India's search for God and God's quest for man.

"Apart from Christ the problem of God becomes a chaos and a confusion. In my childhood I was taught several puranic stories intended to give men the record of the mighty deeds of the gods. . . . In most cases 'the mighty and glorious deeds' reported to have been performed by the gods, in the sacred books, would, if attributed to any man, seriously tarnish his reputation in any decent society and would be strongly resented. The learned pundits from whom I sought explanations told me that we should not judge the gods by our human standards of morality as they had different moral laws governing the actions of the gods. . . . So I had to dismiss all these puranic stories as the fables of a crude and bygone age and set about to think for myself and find out the truth about God.—I was a political prisoner in 1927 when a Christian friend left some books with the jail superintendent for me, also a Hindu friend did the same; among them were the New Testament and the Bhagavad Gita (the most popular scripture among the educated Hindus).

I had read them previously and did so again in prison. Pride and patriotism combined and for a long time I gave first place to the Gita; and after my release published a small tract entitled 'My Religion' in 1928, based chiefly on the Gita. Unfortunately the main rock upon which the Gita shattered itself was Krishna's conception of God. Krishna's God of the Gita is, like Krishna himself, most elusive. In one chapter he is intensely personal and in the very next chapter is beyond recognition, impersonal. It is not possible to arrive at any positive conclusion. . . . In my utter despair, not without regret, I turned to the New Testament . . ." The person of Christ fascinated and captivated him; Matthew 7: 7-11 conquered him, of this passage he writes: "Wade through the literature of the world, both sacred and profane, quote to me a more illuminating, arresting and soul-conquering definition of God to be comprised within a passage of equal or even three times its length. He not only taught us what God is but also by His life is showing us how God loves and works. . . . If at any time the existence of any person equal, if not superior, to him in grandeur of morals, magnitude of love and plenitude of sufferings, is demonstrated, then it will be time enough for humanity to bend its knees before such a person. Till such an impossible contingency happens Jesus Christ stands alone to claim the world's worship. It is sufficient for me if the Lord God of the universe is like my own Jesus. . . . I can never hope to know more of God than what he has chosen



to let me know. We can see God only as we see Him. We can think of God only when we think of Him. . . . Jesus is the perfect revelation of God to mankind. Every thought, idea, definition or delineation of God that has not come to man through Jesus Christ crumbles into dust at the first touch of reason and ethics. Take for instance the case of ancient Hinduism. With keenest intellect our ancient seers wanted to find out God. In the course of their search everything that was worshipped as God had to be rejected. On and on they went, rejecting everything, saying 'Not this, not this.' Finally, not being able to find Him and not being able to quench their thirst and not willing to acknowledge defeat, they contented themselves by saying that everything else was maya or illusion and that 'I alone am God.' Another school of thought had to console itself by creating innumerable gods and goddesses of the most grotesque description and questionable morals. As the scientific spirit and rationalistic enquiry go on advancing, the traditional beliefs that were once held sacred are no longer accepted on mere authority, and we see the most sorry spectacle of the mightiest intellects of the land being engaged in the unprofitable task of text-torturing with a view to find out in the old texts some new meaning which they were never intended to convey. Praise be to that Hebrew Son of Light, God-man Jesus, the Christian alone is spared all these humiliating and corrupting practices. . . . I regard Jesus Christ as God incarnate who came down to earth for the spe-

cial purpose of saving not only all mankind in general but also every human being in particular. Once you meet His gaze, even though it be through the fragmentary, disconnected evidences of Gospel records, there is no escape for you, and the question 'Whom say ye that I am?' greets your ears with a ringing voice and compels you once and for all to fall on your knees and confess 'Thou art the Christ'."

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Thus is India's seeking heart responding to the longing of Him "who is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1: 15), for India is now clearly seeing that it is "God that said: Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 6), "who is the express image of God's person" (Heb. 1: 3).

Happy at the thought of having found God in Him and desiring to possess Him completely, Tilak breaks forth in praise:

### Insatiate

"The more I win Thee, Lord, the more for Thee I pine:

Ah, such a heart is mine.

My eyes behold Thee and are filled, and straight-way then,

Their hunger wakes again!

My arms have clasped Thee and should set Thee  
free, but no,  
I can not let Thee go!  
Thou dwell'st within my heart. Forthwith anew  
the fire,  
Burns of my soul's desire.  
Lord Jesus Christ, Beloved, tell, O tell me true,  
What shall Thy servant do?"



## XIII. Glossary

*(Where no cross or year appears after a personal name, it implies that the person is living at the time of writing.)*

### CHAPTER

- 1—Rudra, †1925, first Indian principal of St. Stephen's Christian College, Delhi.  
Tilak, †1919, Brahmin convert, famous Christian poet, patriot, journalist.  
Sir Chandravarkar, †, High Court Judge and Hindu reformer, Bombay.  
Rahator, †1935, Rajput convert, pastor, social worker among laborers and criminal tribes of Bombay.  
Vedantist, one who holds Vedanta (end of Vedas) philosophy.  
Buddha, †483 B. C., founder of Buddhism.  
Tukaram, †1649, Hindu mystic and poet.  
Upanishads, 108 philosophical treatises on Hindu religion, 1,000 to 300 B. C.  
Radhakrishnan, professor of Eastern Philosophy, Calcutta and Oxford.
- 2—Brahma, the unapproachable, impersonal, absolute Reality, "beyond thought and speech."  
Ramprasad, Hindu religious leader.  
Tulsidas, †1624, rendered Sanskrit Ramayan epic into Hindi.
- 3—Umrao Singh, Sikh convert to Christianity.

4—Chakkarai, Hindu convert and author of theological books.

Vishnu, first god of the Hindu triad, ten incarnations ascribed to him.

5—Jaya, a Hindu devotee.

Chaitanya, †1530, Hindu mystic and religious leader.

Mrs. Nehru, †1937, wife of Pundit J. Nehru, president of the Indian National Congress during 1937.

6—Govind, †, a religious leader of the Sikhs.

Tyabjee, Hindu devotee and writer.

Banerjee, Christian Sadhu working among Hindu pilgrims.

8—Congress Party, founded by a Christian Englishman 1884, now Gandhi's party seeking complete freedom.

9—Datta, principal of Forman Christian College, Lahore.

Sarma, Hindu professor and writer, Madras.

Pundit, title of a Hindu teacher of high merit.

Sadhu Sundar Singh, †1929, Sikh convert, India's great evangelist.

Chundra Leela, †, Brahmin priestess convert, successful evangelist.

Ramabai, †1922, Brahmin convert, founder of Poona rescue homes.

Pillai, †, distinguished Brahmin convert and lawyer, prominent Church leader for fifty years.

10—Santamurti, Brahmin convert.

Kabir, †1518, saint, honored by Hindus and Moslems.

Weerasuriya, †1888, Buddhist priest, convert, became Commander of the Salvation Army in India.

Sen, †1883, outstanding Hindu religious reformer, "almost persuaded."

11—Goreh, †1895, Brahmin convert, Sanskrit scholar, pastor.

Chatterjee, †1916, pastor and leader of Church for forty-eight years.

Banerjee, high-caste convert, †1881, pastor, professor, vice-chancellor, Calcutta University, patriot, writer.

Golak, †, Brahmin convert, first missionary to Sikh country, 1840.

Appasamy, †1926, Brahmin convert, outstanding Christian layman and father of equally famous sons.

Chitambar, first Indian Methodist Bishop.

Azariah, first Indian Anglican Bishop.

Dass, pastor, professor, Christian leader.

Chenchiah, High Court Advocate, author, leader.

Abraham, professor, Serampore Theological College.

S. Ali, †, leader of Mohammedan political party.

M. Nehru, †, prominent leader for freedom.

For the Purposes of the Society

Ralph Tilton

Friendship P. M.